

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



## THESIS

**RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC WARFARE;  
THE KOSOVO CASE**

by

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June 2001

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20010803 011

**REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE**

Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.

<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> June 2001	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE:</b> Religious and Ethnic Warfare; The Kosovo Case			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Teodora Crina Mosoiu				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b> This study focuses on the politics and society of Kosovo from the 12 <sup>th</sup> century until the recent past. It interprets the history of Kosovo in South-Eastern Europe and analyzes the roots of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century conflict. Furthermore, the thesis describes how the Kosovo issues influenced neighboring countries and the implications for European security. Finally, the thesis reflects on the possible future of Kosovo. Two major conflicts that developed in the Balkan area (Bosnia/Kosovo, 1992-1999) raised the question about the stability of the zone. The thesis describes the security risks and challenges to the Balkan area and the prospects for solving these problems.				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Kosovo, Ethnic and Religious Warfare, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Balkans, Former Yugoslavia, Albania, Ethno-Nationalism			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 86	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b>  Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b>  Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b>  Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>  UL	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

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**RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC WARFARE;  
THE KOSOVO CASE**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

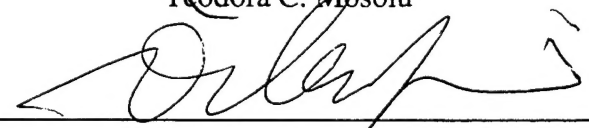

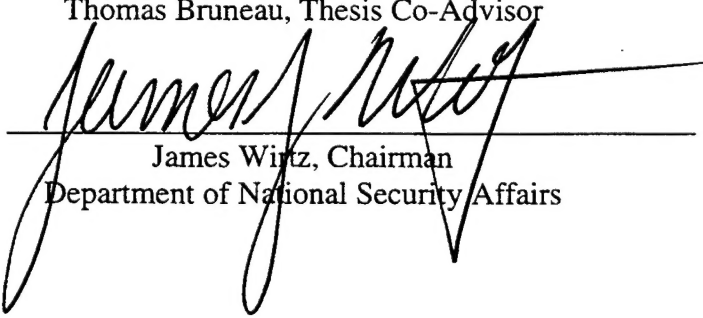
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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the politics and society of Kosovo from the 12<sup>th</sup> century until the recent past. It interprets the history of Kosovo in South-Eastern Europe and analyzes the roots of the 20<sup>th</sup> century conflict. Furthermore, the thesis describes how the Kosovo issues influenced neighboring countries and the implications for European security. Finally, the thesis reflects on the possible future of Kosovo.

Two major conflicts that developed in the Balkan area (Bosnia/Kosovo, 1992-1999) raised the question about the stability of the zone. The thesis describes the security risks and challenges to the Balkan area and the prospects for solving these problems.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The outbreak of violence (1989-1999) between Serbs and Albanians in the Kosovo region compelled the international community to become once more involved in a type of conflict, intrastate warfare that has become dominant since 1989. The end of the Cold War revived a new wave of nationalism and with it the intrastate warfare of ethnic and religious disputes. This phenomenon especially affected ex-Yugoslavia.

The thesis presents an overview of the Kosovo's history and the arguments that allowed both Serbs and Albanians to claim the primacy over the province. Tracing the historical national identity and development helps to explain the current ethno-national conflict in Kosovo.

Achieving independence after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Kosovo's independence was short-lived. Though subjugated to Yugoslav or communist rule since World War I, the Kosovars have retained a national identity causing constant problems for the governments. Under Yugoslavia's 1974 Constitution, the Kosovars were allowed to become an autonomous province and the revocation of this status by Slobodan Milosevic in 1989 caused the Kosovars to establish a "parallel" body politic.

The root causes of the conflict are easy to identify. On one level, the conflict has been fostered by power struggles between elites at the state level. On another level, the conflict has been incited by conflicting national identities, poverty, institutionalized discrimination and a culture of failing to accept responsibility for social problems. The conflict has been heavily influenced by outside forces, including neighboring countries wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, an active diaspora and regional and

international power brokers who have made various promises and threats throughout the years. With half of Europe's Muslim Albanians living outside Albania proper in Slavic and Greek Orthodox countries, the resultant risk of a broader Balkan conflict remains. Nearly eight million Albanians are living outside their homeland in neighboring Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Greece. Due to the irredentist nationalism that characterizes both sides (Serbs and Albanians), the possibility of yet another front on a widening Balkan war cannot be ruled out.

A solution to the Kosovo crisis should take into account the conflicting views of both Serbs and Albanians. A key objective of the international community is to halt violence in Kosovo and prevent it from spreading into Macedonia. If Kosovo again dissolves into war, Macedonia and Albania will be drawn inexorably into the conflict. Then, Greece and Turkey, two U.S. allies and NATO members even will be pulled into a full-blown Balkan war that in turn could spread still further or tear the Atlantic Alliance apart.

When one analyses several options for Kosovo's future a return to the autonomous status seems to be the most acceptable solution for both Serbs and Albanians, as well as for the international community. In the short-term, no decision should be made in Kosovo that does not consider the spillover effect on Albania and Macedonia. On the economic front, the international effort to rebuild Kosovo must proceed in tandem with an effort to develop the other ethnic Albanian populations in the region. On the political front, a failure to address ethnic Albanians' national ambitions will increase the likelihood that the region will become more dangerous and perhaps bloodier.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The author would like to thank Professor Donald Abenheim and Professor Thomas Bruneau for their invaluable guidance, support, and patience during the work in performing this investigation.

The author would like to thank Professor Ron Russell for his assistance in providing advice, support, and understanding in the editing of this thesis.

The author would like to thank Professor Dana Eyre for his guidance at the beginning of this investigation.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION.**

### **A. VICTIMS OF THE HISTORY.**

The Balkans have been a thorny region in the European system and is not by chance named the "tinder box" of Europe. Since 1820, the Balkans witnessed a succession of battles and wars instigated by outside powers and interest groups whenever they considered that the balance of power did not favor them. External and internal powers manipulated and exploited nationalism and outright chauvinism by over-emphasizing differences in language, tradition and religious creed [Ref.1].

Not even Communism, which was generally believed to keep nationalism under control, could cope with this trend. Governments preferred to exploit nationalism for their own purposes [Ref.2].

### **B. CHALLENGES TO THE NEW EUROPEAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT.**

It was hoped that the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Iron Curtain would create a new, more stable and cooperative European security environment. The 1990s, however, have witnessed the revival of nationalism in Eastern and Central Europe and with it ethnic and religious intrastate warfare. This new type of old conflict has produced unbearable atrocities such as mass violence and genocide. Nationalism (a characteristic of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) is regarded today as a relic of an

unenlightened past (“a retrograde step in history” as Lord Acton said [Ref.3]) and creates confusion concerning the passions of national identity. Today, more than fifty years after the Second World War, the idea of nation and nation-state have returned with a vengeance. After the collapse of communism, nationalism will continue to be one of the main principles that will shape international relations and the domestic order of states even into the 21<sup>st</sup> century [Ref.4].

Nationalism is associated with forces striving for political, cultural, social and economic emancipation, as well as with those forces whose goal is oppression. Nationalism inspired the violent expulsion of people from their homelands and justified campaigns of territorial conquest. For individuals and whole people alike, nationalism signaled danger, restrictions of liberty and sometimes even a threat to their survival.

Nationalism has particular structural components: consciousness of the uniqueness or peculiarity of a group of people, particularly with respect to their ethnic, linguistic or religious homogeneity; emphasis of shared socio-cultural attitudes and historical memories; a sense of common mission and disrespect for and animosity toward other peoples (racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism) [Ref.5].

Nationalism is considered to be a largely dynamic principle capable of engendering hopes, emotions and actions; it is a vehicle for activating human beings and creating political solidarity among them.

Separatism, irredentism and expansionism founded on true or sometimes rather questionable historical claims, threaten established states. Further, nationalism might cause dissolution of nation states or trigger ethnic wars. Social groups, nationalities and

nations, among them some who had never possessed a state of their own in recorded history, now demand independence and their own nation state.

Nationalism, as in the decades after the French Revolution, once again manifests itself as a most powerful ideology. It is the destroyer and creator of states, the bearer of strong emotions and aspirations, the mover of feelings of solidarity, sacrifice and hatred. The quest for national autonomy, lost ethnic tradition and submerged cultural heritages triumphed over "proletarian internationalism," communist brotherhood and the idea of the multinational polity. Unfortunately, freedom was accompanied by a frightening proliferation of bloody national conflicts, violence and "ethnic cleansing," a euphemism for persecution, deportation and genocide [Ref.6].

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Europe is reliving its historical experiences of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: nationalism liberates individuals and nations, but at the same time, triggers strife, hatred, bloodshed and endless misery. Once again, nationalism proves its power in politics and in society at large. That nationalism brings with it indescribable suffering and destruction also was the experience of the people in former Yugoslavia. Since 1989 Yugoslavs have witnessed independence for the republics, civil war, national expansionism, and accompanying it, widespread "ethnic cleansing" on a scale not seen in Europe since the Second World War [Ref.7]. The extremely complex ethnic mosaic of Yugoslavia fuelled national clashes in which frequently forgotten historical tensions unexpectedly re-emerged to dominate the political stage.

In the autonomous province of Kosovo, which is part of Serbia, more than 80% of the population is ethnic Albanians who in 1968 began demanding that their status be



upgraded to that of a nation with its own constituent republic. Although their requests were almost completely satisfied in the 1970s, by the early 1980s, the legal and political situation of the Albanian majority in Kosovo, one of the poorest parts of the country, was causing further unrest. The fact that Kosovo shares a common border with the independent Albanian nation-state made the situation even more difficult. In Albania irredentist rhetoric can always be easily whipped up. Consequently, Serbian nationalism was triggered by the Kosovo problem. In 1986, more than 200 Serbian intellectuals drafted a memorandum for the Serbian parliament, which drew attention to the allegedly desperate position of the Serbian minority of Kosovo. Furthermore, the policy of a "Greater Serbia," which demanded the incorporation of Kosovo and other territories into Serbia, inevitably clashed with the political aspirations of the other republics. This accelerated the end of a state that had been widely regarded, particularly after 1945, as a successful experiment, demonstrating to the world that nationalism could be overcome and that multinational states could prosper after all [Ref.8].

Most European countries have minority populations and are prone to internal strife. But the province of Kosovo, as part of Serbia, deserves special attention due to its historical background and surrounding controversies (regarding the primacy of Albanians in this region and the possible belonging of Kosovo to Albania). Furthermore, without a proper solution, the conflict, due to its regional implications and connections can spill over its borders, involving Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, in other words a New Balkan War.

## **II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.**

Although the conflict in Kosovo of 1989-2001 was generated between Serbs and Albanians, the tensions have been exacerbated by others outside Kosovo. The Albanians were spectators, but eventually they became compelled to take one side or another when they saw their rights threatened. However, relations between the two parties in Kosovo have not always taken the form of confrontation. At times cooperation was evident, namely the desire of incorporating Albania into Yugoslavia or possibly of creating a Balkan communist federation after World War II [Ref.9].

Many scholars argue that the region has always been wrecked by “ancient ethnic hatreds.” Others argue that today’s strains are artificial, created by authoritarian rulers who tried to legitimize their power [Ref.10]. However, neither approach is right; rather the strains appeared with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire (1820-1920) and the rise of nationalism.

### **A. KOSOVO OR KOSOVA?**

Albanians and Serbs have always presented arguments about the status of Kosovo by offering “historical claims.”

According to the Serbian position, Kosovo is an indisputable part of Serbia. The Serbs are convinced that before they arrived in the region in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century, Kosovo was almost unpopulated, and the Albanians settled in this area only in the 15<sup>th</sup>

century with the conquering Turks. Kosovo is a hallmark for Serbian national identity, starting with the battle of Kosovo Polje (1389). Indeed it is their cradle, a sort of Serbian Jerusalem as long as the Serbs regard themselves as being the “chosen people” like Jews, due to their troubled history, betrayals and sufferings.

The great myth of Kosovo, so influential in Serbian history is based to a certain extent on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century propaganda. “It is better to die in battle than to live in shame” Lazar who fought at Kosovo Polje, is reputed to have said. “Better it is for us to accept death from the sword in battle than to offer our shoulder to the enemy...” [Ref.11]. It is not difficult to foresee the impact of these words, which infused the fervor of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Serbian nationalism, which aimed to liberate Kosovo from the yoke of Turks. For Serbs to renounce Kosovo would be to deny their national and spiritual heritage. When referring to Kosovo, the Serbs use the name *Kosovo and Metohija*.

According to the Albanian position, the status of Kosovo came into question when Serb politicians stripped it of its autonomy using illegal and arbitrary means [Ref.12]. Kosovo Albanians make their own arguments regarding the longevity of their people in the region and the importance of Kosovo for Albanian national identity (the province is where the Albanian national movement was born in 1878 and where Albanian nationalism has its focus). The Albanians believe they have the strongest historical claim to Kosovo, since their ancestors, the Illyrians, are known to have inhabited the area for several centuries before the arrival of Slavs. The Albanian claim to Kosovo also is based on demography since they constitute more than 90% of the total population, while the Serb's claim derives from emotion [Ref.13]. Moreover, the Albanians underline that years of Serbian human rights abuses made a further cohabitation within Serbia

impossible. When referring to Kosovo, Albanians use the Albanian-language name, *Kosova*.

## **B. RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC DIVISION IN KOSOVO.**

One of the sources of the 1990s tension in Kosovo began long ago when the region was absorbed into the Ottoman Empire, which led to the diffusion of ethnic groups in the Balkan and Danubian area. Under the Ottomans, the subject people were organized above all by religion. In some cases as with the Serbian Orthodox Church, religion fostered the feeling of mutual identity, bonding the whole nation. In this way the idea that Serbia would be resurrected--like Christ--was one that the church nurtured. For hundreds of years the idea of Serbdom, resurrection and Christianity blended. But religion eventually fractured groups speaking the same language, like Albanians--some of whom were Muslims (either of the Sunni or Bektashi orientation) or followers of Eastern Orthodoxy or Roman Catholicism.

As the Ottoman Empire disintegrated in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the ideology of European nationalism penetrated the Balkans, supporting the Balkan nations' claim to liberation from the oppressive Turkish rule. Thus, the foundations of independent national states were laid in Serbia in 1815, in Greece in 1830, in Romania in 1856, in Bulgaria in 1878 and in Albania in 1913. Besides the ruling majority each liberated territory contained various minorities. The nationalist elites regarded the newly emerging states as mere fragments of the ideal territorial nations that they envisaged. Thus, ideal

nation states such as Greater Serbia, Greater Germany, Greater Bulgaria or Greater Albania (that would cover all the territory inhabited by the above nationalities), even the idea of pan-Slavism encompassed territories populated by several minorities and claimed by more than one country [Ref.14]. The Balkan states that have emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century could be characterized as irredentist states as long as they proclaimed their legitimacy on their ability to embody the national “imagined community” [Ref.15].

Kosovo was no exception in the dispute that fomented between the Serbs and Albanians. Despite being one of the richest parts of former Yugoslavia in mineral resources, Kosovo’s persistent overpopulation contributed to it being one of the poorest in the Balkans. Also the demographic strength of the Albanians in Kosovo was one of the significant causes of the two nations’ hostilities over the past two centuries. Furthermore, the Albanians were the least integrated nationality in the former Yugoslavia and formed the lowest stratum of the society, being characterized by “tribal social organization.”

Under the Ottoman rule, but even more recently under the nationalist regimes in Yugoslavia, a good number of ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins became “Islamised” or “Albanianised” while some Albanians became “Serbianised.” Thus, differences in the religious faith became strongly connected to the ethno-political conflicts that involved the Kosovo region.

While it was certain that there were Albanians in medieval Kosovo, it would also seem certain that the majority of people who lived there were mainly Orthodox, and thus ancestors of modern Serbs. A certain number converted to Islam, and either were assimilated into the increasing numbers of Albanians or became Serbian-speaking

Muslims. Over the centuries, however, a higher proportion of Albanians than Serbs were to convert to Islam.

One of the main reasons for this religious conversion was economic. Those who became "Islamised" received certain privileges from the Ottoman Porte. (They received more land and did not have to pay taxes). Meanwhile, under the Turks, Serbs moved northward, to Bosnia, Hungary (especially Vojvodina), in northern Serbia and Croatia. On the other hand, politically, the Serbs counted for little, but the case of Muslim Albanians was different. Because it was Muslim, the Albanian aristocracy was the power in the land and in constant struggle with the Sultan and the Turks. Ottoman troops were frequently campaigning to quell one revolt after another, but these were not uprisings, which aimed at independence as such. Moreover, Albanians could and did rise to the highest position in the Empire. With the decadence of the "sick man of Europe" (from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and with the reemergence of Christian states in the region (Serbia, Greece, Montenegro) all of which claimed land inhabited by Albanians, the latter turned out to be increasingly nervous and contemplated their long-term future. For Albanians, the Empire was a guarantee of their continuing dominance of the lands they lived on without the fear of partition by the Christian states.

The Serbian-Turkish wars of 1876-1878 caused the most massive migration in the Balkans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A million Christians and a million Muslims--including, of course, Albanians from those lands reconquered by Serbs--fled their homes [Ref.16]. Most of the Albanians fled to Kosovo, which was to remain Ottoman until the Balkan War of 1912.

### **C. KOSOVO UNTIL WORLD WAR II.**

The Ottoman Empire had always tolerated a large measure of religious and cultural autonomy, while extirpating political dissidence. Assimilation into the ruling Muslim culture, except in Bosnia, Albania and parts of Bulgaria, was low. As a result, ready-made Christian nations were waiting to emerge as soon as the Ottoman power receded (Russian-Turkish War 1875-1877).

1878 is remembered as the year Serbia was officially recognized as a fully independent state. Nevertheless, Albanians remembered it as the year of the League of Prizren. Fearing the imminent loss of Albanian-inhabited land to the new Christian states, a meeting of Albanian leaders was held in Prizren in June 1878. Some wanted to defend Muslim and Albanian traditions, which they believed were threatened by modernizing reformers. Others wanted an autonomous Albanian state, including Kosovo, to be set up within the empire [Ref.17].

By 1880, due to the deteriorating relations between the politicians of the League and the Porte, the League assumed control of Kosovo and some of its leaders began to think in terms of independence. Unfortunately, the spring of 1881 saw the insurrection crushed by Turkish troops. However, the idea that Albanians, both Muslims and Catholics, and those hailing from both the Northern Gheg and Southern Tosk tribes should be united as Albanians only and fight for either autonomy or even independence, could not be swept aside.

The atmosphere in Serbia prior to the Balkan War explains why, in 1912, the Serbs were able to retake Kosovo while the Albanians were unable to secure a united Albania from the wreckage of the Ottoman Empire. The Serbs already had a state, which cultivated a national myth, and just as important, Serbia and Montenegro had organized modern armies. By contrast, the Albanian experience and tradition of rising against the Turks would not be enough to fend off the Serbs when the time came [Ref.18].

Lost for a very short time, Kosovo was reconquered in 1918 by the Serbs. On December 1, 1918 the new Yugoslav state, called until 1929, "The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes," came into being. Bands of guerrillas, *kacaks*, which were against the reimposition of Serbian or Yugoslav rule because they did not want Kosovo to be part of Yugoslavia, resisted the new authorities. The new state was a state of the south Slavs, as its name suggested (comprising also Magyars, Germans, Slovaks), but the Albanians are not Slavs. That aside from the antipathy that Albanians felt toward the new state was now fueled by the fact that Albanian language schools were closed and in an effort to redress the ethnic balance, the Serbian-dominated authorities encouraged Serbian and Montenegrin settlers to come to Kosovo [Ref. 19]. The settlers received special privileges and, "under the vague pretext of agrarian reform, land which was 'abandoned' or deliberately described as such, is liberally distributed to Serb and Montenegrin colonists" [Ref. 20].

Some 70,000 colonists were brought from Montenegro and Herzegovina to Kosovo between 1919 and 1939 and although dispossessed Albanians were supposed to be compensated for confiscated land, this rarely happened. In some places, Albanians lost their land or were restricted to tiny plots because they could not prove their ownership



with title deeds. This spurred thousands to emigrate and some 150,000 people are believed to have left for Turkey in the years between 1910 and 1920. In 1938, Yugoslavia and Turkey signed a convention, which foresaw the emigration of some 40,000 families (around 200,000 people) to Turkey over the next six years. Officially the convention talked about the "repatriation of the Turkish Muslim population" but apart from Yugoslavia's relatively small numbers of ethnic Turks and Slav Muslims from Macedonia, it was clear from the regions specified in the convention that the bulk of these people would be Albanians. In the end, the document remained a dead letter due to the outbreak of war.

During World War II, after 1941, Kosovo was divided by the Axis powers into three sectors. The Bulgarians were given a small part in the east. Mitrovica and the zinc- and lead-producing Trepca mines were attached to German-occupied Serbia but the region was given a good measure of local control under Albanian leadership. The rest of the province, plus Albanian-inhabited areas of western Macedonia, was attached to Albania, which had been conquered by the Italians in 1939 [Ref.21].

At the beginning of the Italian occupation, the Kosovo Albanians were enthusiastic. Although they were occupiers, they also had brought about the unification of almost all Albanian lands. This change of situation gave those Albanians who were motivated to do so the opportunity to wreak revenge on the region's Serbs, and especially Serbian and Montenegrin settlers who had come to Kosovo over the previous twenty years. In the wake of the Yugoslav collapse, Serbian villages were burnt and Serbs were killed and expelled by armed gangs. Following the capitulation of Italy in September of 1943, Kosovo and Albania were immediately invaded by the Germans, who although in

control, maintained the friction and capitalized on the profound desire of the majority of Albanians for national unification [Ref.22].

While the Nazis had difficulty in recruiting collaborators among Kosovars, Tito's communists had severe problems finding anyone to recruit at all. The problem was that most Kosovars did not ascribe to communist tenets. Communism was associated with the Serbs and thus the future return of Yugoslav rule, a point skillfully exploited by Italian and German propagandists. In the end, the Communists resorted to a subterfuge in their bid issuing a key declaration:

Kosovo-Metohija is an area with a majority Albanian population, which, now as always in the past, wishes to be united with Albania...The only way that the Albanians of Kosovo-Metohija can be united with Albania is through a common struggle with the other peoples of Yugoslavia against the occupiers and their lackeys. For the only way freedom can be achieved is if all the peoples, including the Albanians have the possibility of deciding their own destiny, with the right to self-determination, up to and including secession.[Ref.23]

Unfortunately, they were to be betrayed. In July 1945, Kosovo was formally annexed to Serbia. Kosovo was then declared an autonomous region of Serbia, which in turn became a constituent part of the new Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. According to an article published in 1981 in an Albanian newspaper, in 1946 Tito told Enver Hoxha, the Albanian communist leader: "Kosovo and the other Albanian regions belong to Albania and shall be returned to them, but not now because the Great Serb reaction would not accept such a thing." [Ref.24]

The Albanian Communists, in Albania and Kosovo were under Yugoslav tutelage. However, this was not the only reason why they did not oppose the reannexation of

Kosovo. The other reason was that at this time, until Yugoslavia's break with Stalin in 1948, there was much talk about creating of an all-embracing Balkan Federation, in which case the issue of Kosovo might be resolved within this wider framework. "Is it in our interest to ask for Kosovo?" asked Enver Hoxha in December of 1946.

This is not a progressive thing to do. No, in this situation, on the contrary, we must do whatever is possible to ensure that the Kosovars become brothers with the Yugoslavs. [Ref.25]

#### **D. DEMANDS FOR A KOSOVAR REPUBLIC.**

The future of Kosovo was discussed for the first time at the Assembly of National Representatives of Kosovo and Metohija held in Prizren in July 1945. The Prizren Resolution pronounced that the Albanian population had accepted neither the dismemberment of the region nor the dismemberment of Yugoslavia. It had been consistently maintained that this resolution taken in a hurry by delegates shortly after the crushed Albanian insurrection was the legal expression of Kosovo-Metohija's free will for union with Serbia, and thus with the new state of Yugoslavia [Ref.26].

The demands for a Kosovar republic are as old as the adoption of the first postwar Yugoslav Constitution in 1946, when Yugoslavia was defined as a federal state of six sovereign republics. The republics were defined partially according to national principles and partially according to history. A special compromise was created in the Republic of Serbia: two "provinces" were given a degree of autonomy. Vojvodina was proclaimed an "autonomous province" and was allowed its own governmental structure, with independent decision-making responsibility and its own Supreme Court. In contrast,

Kosovo was called an "autonomous region." Local administrative units there were denied any independent decision-making authority. Both provinces were allowed to send representatives to a chamber of the federal legislature, but their internal affairs were to be decided by the Republic of Serbia, not by the federal government. At this time, Yugoslavia was divided into two categories: "hosts and the historical guests." The hosts or nations were Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Montenegrins. The guests were called "national minorities" and they included other groups [Ref.27].

The constitutional law of 1953 radically changed the 1946 Yugoslav Constitution. The constitutional powers of Vojvodina and Kosovo were delegated to the Republic of Serbia. Neither the republics nor the provinces had much autonomy at that time, as a strong centralist administration controlled Yugoslavia. Three years later, the classification of "national minorities" was upgraded to "nationalities" because the word "minority" was perceived to be demeaning.

In 1961, the "Muslims" became the last group to be given the status of a "nation." Although Albanians living in Yugoslavia also sought to gain this status, they were still considered a "national minority." In 1963, the new Yugoslav and Serbian Constitutions were adopted. Both documents increased Serbia's control over the provinces by conditioning the provinces' autonomy on the will of the Serbian government.

In the summer of 1968, various party bodies discussed whether Kosovo should be reconstituted as a republic. The Provincial Party decided to press instead for giving the province more autonomy (without republic status). On November 27, the eve of the Albanian National Independence Day and Kosovar Liberation Day, rioting erupted

throughout Kosovo. The demonstrations demanded that Kosovo be recognized as a separate republic. Federal and Serbian authorities made several concessions, including the establishment of an Albanian-language university, the creation of Albanian cultural institutions and renewed cultural and educational ties between Kosovo and Albania [Ref.28].

Between 1968 and 1974, amendments to the Federal and Serbian Constitutions further augmented the independent authority of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Thus, the provinces were allowed to promulgate their own laws. Kosovo and Vojvodina were allowed to participate in the Federal government as separate delegations representing their provinces. Kosovars won a symbolic victory as the name of the region changed from Kosovo-Metohija to Kosovo. The reforms in Kosovo occurred against rising Croatian nationalism and a steady emigration of Slaves from Kosovo [Ref.29].

In 1974, a new Yugoslav Constitution codified the changes that were already in place regarding the autonomy of the provinces and republics. Thus, the 1974 Constitution formally defined the autonomous provinces as constituent members of the federation. Kosovo and Vojvodina were granted the de facto status of sovereign republics in almost all respects, differing from the other six Yugoslav republics, in that they were not granted the right to secede from the federation.

Kosovo Albanians made enormous cultural and educational gains during the 1970s. At the same time, their disappointment at not being granted the status of a nation or a republic was growing. Emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo increased and those who left complained that Albanians drove them out. [Ref.30]

In 1981, having as a starting point a student protest, callings for a "Kosovar Republic" and even demands of unity with Albania began. In January 1986, the Committee of Serbs and Montenegrins demanded greater rights for Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo. In September, a Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts was leaked to the press. The Memorandum was called the platform for Serbian nationalism, and even a "blueprint for war." Slobodan Milosevic, the newly appointed leader of the League of Communists of Serbia did not castigate the writers of the Memorandum, instead he repeated some of the basic concepts in a speech in Kragujevac [Ref.31].

At the beginning of 1987, Milosevic addressed a rally in Belgrade calling for a reduction in the autonomy status of Kosovo and Vojvodina. In 1988, Milosevic proposed several measures and constitutional amendments that would have effectively revoked the autonomous status of the two provinces. In response, Albanian demands for secession from Serbia increased.

In February 1989, Serbia's National Assembly passed amendments to Serbia's Constitution, which centralized in Belgrade control over essential functions. The federal government initiated "emergency measures" in Kosovo, imposing curfews, riot police and administrative detention. Because of strikes initiated by miners in Kosovo, key industries were placed under compulsory work orders (thus, prohibiting the strikes) and a large number of federal troops were deployed in Kosovo. It was the fourth such deployment since 1945 (the others being in 1968 and 1981). The Kosovo Assembly (the local government of the province) acting under extreme pressure, voted to accept

amendments that stripped Kosovo of its autonomy. Serbian officials announced that Serbia was “whole again” and violence broke out in Kosovo [Ref.32].

In January 1990, demonstrations commenced in Kosovo demanding the lifting of “emergency measures” and the proclamation of an “Albanian Republic of Kosovo.” [Ref.33] A full-fledged state of emergency was declared and federal police troops were sent to Kosovo. The Serbian legislature passed a law that effectively extends the emergency measures in Kosovo. The law led to the closing of the Kosovo Academy of Arts and Sciences and the dismissal of many state employees. In July, Albanian members of the Assembly of Kosovo gathered in front of the assembly building in Pristina and adopted a constitutional declaration proclaiming the “Kosova Republic.” The Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Serbia officially dissolved the Assembly of Kosovo and declared the proclamation of the “Kosova Republic” illegal. In September, at a secret meeting, Albanian representatives of the officially dissolved Assembly of Kosovo passed the Constitution of the “Republic of Kosova.” Simultaneously, the “parallel” Kosovar Albanian State began. The day after, the Assembly of Serbia passed the new Constitution of Serbia. Vojvodina and Kosovo were deprived of their autonomous status. In December, Slobodan Milosevic was elected president of Serbia.

In 1992, the Committee of Senior of Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (now OSCE) Officials send to Yugoslavia two special missions to examine the situation in Kosovo. In May, parliamentary and presidential elections deemed illegal by the Serbian authorities were held in Kosovo. With more than 95% of the vote cast almost exclusively by the Albanian nationality, Ibrahim Rugova was elected president of the Republic of Kosova. Rugova’s party, the Democratic Alliance of Kosovo (LDK) won

almost all of the parliamentary seats. In June, the summit of Heads of states and governments of the European Community adopted in Lisbon a Declaration on Yugoslavia. Among other matters, the declaration stated that it expected Serbian leadership to stop the reprisals in Kosovo and to establish a serious dialogue with the representatives of Albanians from that province [Ref.34].

In August, at its session in Prague, the Committee of High Officials of the CSCE adopted a report on the situation in Kosovo, Sandzak (an area in Serbia with a large Muslim population) and Vojvodina. The CSCE proposed a permanent mission to Kosovo. In September, Kosovars voted in a referendum to declare Kosova a "sovereign and independent state." [Ref.35]

In October, Federal Prime Minister Milan Panic visited Kosovo. After talks with representatives of Serbs and Montenegrins, he met with Ibrahim Rugova. According to official Serb sources, they agreed on establishing joint task forces to deal with legislation, education and the provision of information in the Albanian language. According to Rugova, Panic was attempting to strike a deal in order to entice Albanians to vote in the next federal elections. In October, co-chairpersons of the conference on Yugoslavia, Cyrus Vance and David Owen together with Prime Minister Panic visited Pristina. The Serbian media features Lord Owen stating at the press conference, "Kosovo should have a special status or autonomy, but only within Serbia." Tadeusz Mazowiecki, special envoy of the UN Secretary General, submitted a report to the UN Commission on Violations of Human Rights in the former Yugoslavia. The report included violations in Kosovo.



In May 1993, Vitaly Churkin, deputy foreign minister of the Russian Federation, met Albanian leaders in Pristina. The Belgrade press reported that Churkin said at a press conference that human rights in Kosovo must be respected, but that the world powers do not support ethnic Albanian's declaration on the province's independence. [Ref.36] In July, the government of Yugoslavia refused to extend the mandate of the CSCE monitoring missions in Kosovo, Vojvodina and Sandjak. In Geneva in August, the UN subcommittee for protecting minority rights adopted a resolution on Kosovo, condemning Yugoslavia for discriminatory measures and violations of the human rights of the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Throughout 1994 and 1995, police abuse and harassment continued in Kosovo and there was little attention to the unrest there. In 1996, Serbia signed a deal with ethnic Albanians leaders to return Albanian students to mainstream education after a six-year boycott of state schools and colleges. The agreement was not implemented.

The clandestine separatist group, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), emerged for the first time, claiming responsibility for a series of bomb attacks against Serbs. Disputes among the Kosovo Albanian Movement grow more public as militant ethnic Albanian leaders questioned Rugova's strategy of "passive resistance." In 1997, armed men staged simultaneous night attacks on police stations in ten Kosovo towns and villages. As the number of guerilla incidents increased, clashes between police and peaceful protesters also continued sporadically.

In 1998, dozens were killed in Serbian police operations. Tens of thousands protested in Pristina against the violence and street clashes erupted. Kosovo Albanian leader, Ibrahim Rugova, disregarding Western calls for compromise, demanded outright independence for Kosovo. Ethnic Albanians voted for a president and assembly in

elections that were considered illegal by Belgrade. Rugova was elected again, but tensions deepened among Kosovo Albanian leaders.

In a referendum, 95% of Serbs voted against international intervention in Kosovo. The Contact Group for the former Yugoslavia agreed, with the exception of Russia, to impose new sanctions against Yugoslavia over Kosovo. The sanctions were never implemented. UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, warned NATO that it had to seek a Security Council mandate for any military intervention in the Serbian province. Hundreds of ethnic Albanians fled their village homes after Serb police and military and paramilitary troop attacked in the middle of the night. [Ref.37]

France and Britain drafted a UN Security Council resolution to establish a cease-fire. The number of displaced people in Kosovo reached at least one hundred thousand. The KLA claimed to hold one-third of the territory of Kosovo. Human rights monitors reported that Serbs were deliberately targeting civilians. In August, a month later, the number of people displaced was estimated at three to five thousand, out of 2.5 million.

The UN Security Council voted in favor of a resolution calling for a cease-fire in Kosovo and warning the Yugoslav government of "additional measures" if it failed to comply. NATO took the first steps toward a military intervention in Kosovo. Prime Minister Mirko Marianovic announced the defeat of Albanian separatists and the withdrawal of government forces from Kosovo. Heavy fighting continued despite Serbian reassurance that the offensive was over. Humanitarian groups reported that thousands of ethnic Albanians were still hiding in the woods in Kosovo: many, they feared would freeze to death in the approaching winter. [Ref.38]

In October 1998, NATO threatened military action against Serbia. Compelled, Milosevic agreed to withdraw Yugoslav troops from Kosovo and to permit monitoring by international observers. Early reports from the field were that Serbian police and military were openly violating the agreement.

### **III. A NEW CONFLICT IN THE BALKANS.**

#### **A. THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT.**

There are two causes of the Kosovo conflict since 1989. First, the conflict has been fostered by power struggles between state elites. Second, the conflict has been incited by conflicting national identities, poverty, institutionalized discrimination and a culture of failing to accept responsibility for social problems [Ref.39]. The conflict has been heavily influenced by outside forces, including a neighboring war (in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia), an active diaspora and regional and international power brokers who have made various promises and threats to the parties throughout the years, leading to false hopes about an autonomous Kosovo.

First, Serbian leader, Slobodan Milosevic has manipulated the Serbian claims over Kosovo and anti-Albanian sentiments to build and maintain his power, even though the struggle for power was not only for Kosovo but also for control over all of Yugoslavia. Tension between the two groups has a complicated historical background and few outsiders fully understand the complexity and depth of their mistrust. Animosity between the two groups has virtually become almost a part of their cultures; individual and group identities are constructed against the mirror of their enemy "other." Milosevic tried to present the struggle in Kosovo as one between Serbs and Albanians over scarce resources. When opportune for Serbian power brokers, Kosovo is more than a dispute over land: it is the image of Serbianity, which Serbs must protect.

In their struggle for power, political elites exploit the disturbances that already exist in the general populace and when desirable they create new disturbances. Both Serbian and Albanian elites have engaged in such behavior, but Serbian elites have had more power to do so. Disturbances stem from national identities that each group tried to define in opposition with the other. Thus, Serbs see themselves as “cultured” compared to the primitive Albanians, while Kosovo Albanians today see themselves as “peaceful” compared with the “aggressive” Serbs. [Ref.40]

Serb nationalism is wrapped in the story of Serb victimization, the necessary need to fight and preserve the motherland whose heart is Kosovo, the struggle for Orthodox purity against the primitive and traitorous Slavic Muslims. Kosovo Albanian nationalism stems from a narrative of victimization but it is supported by the most recent victimization at the hands of the Serbs.

In the Kosovo case both the existing nationalism and the nationalism creation by politicians have shaped the political power struggle. Serbian and Albanian nationalisms have some degree of autonomy that precedes and shapes the political struggles of today. Meanwhile, Serbian and Albanian leaders have used nationalism as a claim of political legitimacy to justify their political reality. [Ref.41]

Second, the conflict stems from the ways the national identities play out in everyday life. In the Kosovo case, the conflict has been influenced by “the quality of the relationship between peoples and how these relationships either promote or thwart the satisfaction of basic human needs of development.” [Ref.42]

Societies in which basic human needs are threatened are prone to conflict. These needs include the need to belong to a group with which individuals can identify; the need to feel a sense of security and esteem when expressing one's own identity, and the need to have one's own identity recognized and acknowledged. In particular, the very identities of Serbs and Albanians are under attack. Furthermore, Serbs and Albanians misunderstand each other's needs and desires. Each side has failed to recognize their shared interests and common desires, equating the "others" with the self-serving agenda of their leaders.

Political elites deliberately perpetuate and exploit conflicts between the populaces. Social and economic institutions and structures that perpetuate poverty and injustice further ensure that human needs remain unmet. The Serbian-run institutions in Kosovo discriminate against Albanians in particular and have a great detrimental impact on the quality of life of all residents of Kosovo. These institutions are a form of structural violence against both Serbs and Albanians serving to divide and to prepare both sides for war. [Ref.43]

## **B. ACTORS INVOLVED.**

Apart from a reappraisal of social issues, the Kosovars had to respond to new constitutional changes of 1989. Thus, a major political turn-about in the Albanian national movement occurred when the old Marxist-Leninist parties and organizations disappeared from the scene and were replaced by new Albanian parties and leaders. By far the most significant of these was the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) formed on

23 of December 1989 and headed by Dr Ibrahim Rugova. [Ref.44] Under his leadership, a parallel and underground Albanian body politic and administration was established. In 1992 He was elected the president of the "Republic of Kosovo." Although a growing number of Albanian political leaders and intellectuals complained that the LDK monopolized Kosovo's political life, none could mount a serious threat to Rugova.

Kosovo's Slav and Albanian communities had lived since 1992 in an apartheid situation, virtually without communications and in a state of open hostilities. The LDK was insisting on Kosovo's statehood as the source of the Albanians' sovereign rights, but although politicians in Belgrade recognized the danger of Kosovo sliding into communal violence, wounded national pride failed to accept that the Serbs had lost Kosovo not only demographically but because they could only maintain control over the province by severe police repression and military force [Ref.45]. Albanians through LDK continued their policy of passive resistance, born out of their military weakness. Consequently, the LDK continued to be a movement rather than a political party, and for that reason perhaps failed to develop a fully democratic structure. Over time Kosovar leadership followed a policy of peaceful resistance amid an increasingly tense atmosphere, trying to avoid at all costs the bloodshed they had witnessed in Bosnia [Ref.46].

In the meantime, the military presence in Kosovo had been growing. Thus, starting in 1995, military and paramilitary groups such as the "White Eagles" led by Vojlav Seselj and the "Tigers" led by Arkan were becoming increasingly active in Kosovo. The key element in Arkan's strategy was to play on the fears of the Serb minority in Kosovo of an Albanian uprising in order to mobilize support for a cleansing program.

The growing resentment at international negotiators for not according the Kosovo Albanians full status at talks held in 1993 in Geneva had begun to shift the balance within Rugova's movement toward radical militants who preached a military solution. The LDK's policy of non-violence was beginning to be challenged by newly emerging and more radical groups like the popular "Front of the Republic of Kosovo" and the "National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo", which called for popular revolt throughout Kosovo. [Ref.47]

Rugova's policy of peaceful resistance and parallel government enabled the Serbs effectively to control Kosovo, and to encourage Kosovar emigration by violent means, and therefore the situation was stable, at least in the short-run. Rugova's policies while relying on the international community to appreciate the justice of the Albanian cause in Kosovo, failed to change the situation and this led to increasing tensions within the LDK. The rift between hardliners in the LDK pushing for total independence for Kosovo and moderates advocating autonomy within a new Yugoslavia was set to widen. [Ref.48]

The LDK's policy of non-violence was challenged by the appearance on the political arena of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) an underground guerrilla group meant to avenge Albanians dead during Serb attacks and to fight for Kosovo independence. By persistently demanding an independent Kosovo, the LDK leadership had maintained among its supporters unrealistically high expectations that such a state would eventually gain international recognition. The inability of the LDK to realize its ambitions even in part had convinced a growing number of Kosovars that both the international community and Ibrahim Rugova supported the status quo in Kosovo. Thus,



the only solution for an independent Kosovo seemed to come from guerrilla groups such as the KLA.

A key player in the Kosovo war was Slobodan Milosevic. His rise to power was sealed by a nationalistic speech he gave in Kosovo Polje on April 1987:

Yugoslavia does not exist without Kosovo! Yugoslavia would disintegrate without Kosovo! Yugoslavia and Serbia are not going to give up Kosovo! [Ref.49]

Milosevic, the leader of the League of Communists of Serbia, emerged from a meeting of angry Kosovo Serbs who were complaining of harassment at the hands of the local ethnic dominated authorities. The importance of Kosovo myth to Serbian politics as Gale Stokes has observed,

...lies not in these actual histories but in its selection by the nationalists as the appropriate symbolic universe of Serbianness. It provides a vocabulary of experiences outside time. [Ref.50]

In 1989, the "great defeat" served as a reminder of Serbian suffering and the need for Serbs to defend even their motherland, Kosovo. Mention of the Ottoman Empire also triggered the image of the evil Turks--shorthand for all Muslims, including Kosovo Albanians (regardless of their religion) and Yugoslav ("Slavic") Muslims who were considered race traitors for converting to Islam during the Ottoman rule. [Ref.51] By capitalizing on the greatest myth in Serbian folklore, Milosevic pitted Serbs not only against Albanians but also against the other enemy identified by the Kosovo myth: Slavic Muslims.

In the late 1980s, with Milosevic acting as a bearer of strong nationalism, the Serbs marched into war and disaster. The irony is that Milosevic had predicted that Yugoslavia would disintegrate without Kosovo, yet it was Yugoslavia's fate to disintegrate with Kosovo, as the fissures that spread from the unhappy province managed to splinter the rest of the country. Milosevic boosted his popularity among Serbs by his commanding response to the "Kosovo question." He solidified his control by pushing through constitutional changes and instituting emergency rule, which gave Serbia ironclad control over Kosovo and not incidentally coercive power over Vojvodina, Montenegro, and it appeared, Macedonia.

### **C. LEGAL STATUS OF KOSOVO.**

Under the last Constitution of the SFR Yugoslavia, promulgated in 1974, Kosovo was accorded the highest degree of autonomy in the entire history of Yugoslavia. The 1974 Constitution also divided the state sovereignty between the Federation and its constituent members--the Republics. The federal legislative body had the right to define and shape the political system, as well as to regulate social and economic relations. Bodies of the Yugoslav federation ruled on the kind, the level and the sources of its revenues. However, this federal system was very specific as the republics and two autonomous provinces--Kosovo and Metohija--were equally and directly represented in all legislative and executive bodies of the federation. The Federal Constitution also established that the two provinces were constituent parts of the Republic of Serbia. Kosovo was authorized to create its own Constitution.

Under the Kosovo Constitution, and within the unique system of legislative and executive power, the Kosovo Assembly through its executive body--the Executive Council of Kosovo, governed the province. The Kosovo Assembly was authorized to pass legislation in all the areas related to the proper functioning of Kosovo, whereas the legislation passed by the Assembly of Serbia related to the same areas could not be enforced in the province. The Executive Council of Kosovo acted as the executive power in Kosovo in line with the provincial and federal acts, while the Executive Council of Serbia had no prerogatives for acting in the region of Kosovo. Kosovo had its own police force, inspection bodies, courts of law at all levels, its own system of social services and health centers, and an education system encompassing primary, secondary and high schools. The provincial bodies or municipalities from Kosovo managed all the natural resources and the economy.

The status of Kosovo and the prerogatives of its executive and legislative bodies could not be changed without the consent of the Kosovo Assembly. [Ref.52] This specific system functioned under the conditions of a single-party political monopoly and ideological unity of the Communist Party. When that unity began to crumble in the mid-80s, all the weaknesses of this arrangement between Serbia and Kosovo, suddenly emerged, revealing the lack of mechanisms for rational and efficient resolution of conflicting or opposing interests.

The abolition of Kosovo's autonomy began with the amendments to the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Serbia on March 28, 1989. It was a centralist constitutional and judicial settlement that undermined Kosovo's constitutional position as one of Yugoslavia's eight federal units. With the law suspending the work of the Kosovo

Executive Council and the Kosovo Assembly, the Province lost its existence as a socio-political entity and was deprived of state authority. On February 3, 1989 Serbia's National Assembly passed amendments, which gave Serbia more direct control over the Autonomous Province's security, judiciary, finance and social planning. [Ref.53] The Albanians opposed the amendments regarding them as a step in removing rights guaranteed to them by the 1974 Constitution, which they had interpreted as the primary safeguard of their national rights. The Serbs, on the other hand, saw the amendments as a means of safeguarding the minorities in Kosovo against what they claimed were "the genocidal tactics of the Albanian separatists." By stripping the provinces of their constitutional power and curtailing their legislative, administrative and judicial powers the authorities in Serbia tried to resolve the problem of their southern province by presenting it as a matter of the legislative and executive-administrative activities of Serbia's legal bodies. The political goal of these activities was to prevent Kosovo's secession and to help the Serbs return to the province.

In July 1990, the Belgrade government went one step further by depriving the provincial authorities of their power; it prevented the provincial parliament from meeting simply by expelling its members from the building. The Albanian parliamentarians then assembled on the steps outside on July 2 and proclaimed the sovereign "Republic of Kosovo" within the Yugoslav Federation and its secession from Serbia. [Ref.54] In response, Serbia dissolved Kosovo's government and Assembly and Serbia's National Assembly took administrative and executive control of the Province, now once more renamed Kosovo-Metohija. This decision was supported by the Presidency of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia at its session on July 11, thus finally

removing the legal basis for Kosovo's autonomy, which had been granted under the 1974 Constitution. After that, the dissolved Kosovo Parliament met secretly in the small town of Kacanik near the Macedonian border. Here they adopted the "Kacanik Constitution," which described the "Republic of Kosovo" as "a democratic state of the Albanian people and of members of other nations and national minorities who are its citizens: Serbs, Montenegrins, Croats, Turks, Romanians and others living in Kosovo". [Ref.55]

In the years of crisis and social upheaval in Yugoslavia, Serbia and Kosovo, the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, backed by the police and populist movement, and unchallenged by the federal institutions, first paralyzed the institutions of the constitutional autonomy of Kosovo, and then in the final stage of Yugoslavia's break-up passed the new Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. Under that Constitution, the National Assembly of Serbia had an exclusive jurisdiction over the status of Kosovo. The concrete deficiency of Kosovo's new constitutional status concerted the political will of the Albanians to turn the province into a state of their own and place it out of the scope of Serbia's authority. The promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia on September 28, 1990 laid the legal foundations for the creation of an entirely new political system that is an entirely new system of economic, social and administrative relations in the Republic of Serbia.

In response to their newly defined socio-economic and political status imposed by Belgrade, the Albanians refused to recognize the legitimacy and legality of the Serbian state in Kosovo and set about establishing a parallel, underground Albanian political body [Ref.56]. On September 22, 1991, the Parliament of what Kosovars now called the "Republic of Kosovo" approved the "Resolution on Independence and Sovereignty of

Kosovo.” This decision was put to a popular vote in a referendum organized clandestinely between September 26 and 30 and Kosovo independence was overwhelmingly supported. In accordance with the popular vote, the Kosovo Parliament amended the “Kacanik Constitution” and declared the independence of Kosovo on October 19, 1991. The Serbian authorities called the referendum illegal, unconstitutional and labeled it the Province’s first step toward secession and unification with neighboring Albania.

Having applied to the European Community on December 23, 1991 for recognition as an independent state and being rejected, the Kosovar leadership set about consolidating its parallel administration to the official Serbian one. [Ref.57]

In the wake of their declaration of independence the “Coordinating Committee of Albanian Political parties in Yugoslavia,” with Ibrahim Rugova as chairman passed a political declaration in October 1991 putting forth three options for the solution of the “Albanian question in Yugoslavia”:

- If the external and internal borders of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) were to remain unaltered, the status of a sovereign and independent state with the right to associate in a new community of sovereign Yugoslav states was demanded. Ethnic Albanians within Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro should enjoy the status of a nation and not be a national minority within it.
- Should only the internal borders of the SFRY be changed and not the external ones, the founding of an Albanian republic was called for, incorporating apart from

Kosovo, those territories in central Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia inhabited by Albanians.

- In the event of the external borders being changed, the Albanians would by referendum and general declaration, proclaim territorial unification with Albania and create of “an undivided Albanian state in the Balkans with Albanian ethnic boundaries”, namely, within the boundaries proclaimed by the First Prizren League in 1878. [Ref.58]

Until the secession of Slovenia and Croatia (1991), which marked the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Kosovar Albanians planned their national goals within the framework of Yugoslavia. Only when it had become obvious that the country was disintegrating did the Albanian population assert its will to secede from Yugoslavia and unite with Albania. With the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the swift disintegration of Yugoslavia, and the new process underway in Albania many Kosovars believed that a new world order had arrived and that the Albanian national question had to be seen in a new light.

In late October 1991, Albania the only country to do so officially recognized the “Republic of Kosovo” as a sovereign and independent state. This gesture, it hoped, would have spurred on further international recognition of Kosovo. [Ref.59] The Kosovars believed a democratic government in Albania would use its new power and energy for the benefit and progress of Kosovo. The leader of the Democratic Party (DP), Sali Berisha, told supporters that “the DP will not stop fighting until her great dream of uniting the Albanian nation comes true.” [Ref.60] Already in its initial program, the DP had endorsed an eventual “democratic” union with Kosovo. This was a provocative statement but

Berisha just as many other European politicians believed that now since two of the former Yugoslav republics had international recognition, Kosovo's turn must also come.

When Sali Berisha was elected the President of Albania, following the collapse of the one party state, the whole nation achieved, albeit briefly, a form of spiritual reunification. "There is no Albania without Kosovo and vice versa" [Ref.61] declared the official Albanian press agency. At DP rallies the admonition rang out: "Let us demolish the border dividing Albanians from Albanians." This was an explicit call for national reunification which sent shock-waves through the international community whose efforts to contain the fighting in Bosnia and thus avoid any readjustment of borders was failing dismally. However, once Berisha had taken office as President and was confronted head-on by Albania's catastrophic economic situation, his priorities had to be quickly readjusted. In addition, as Albania began to participate in the difficult negotiations concerning the Yugoslav conflict, much pressure was put on him to temper nationalistic claims--in return for which his administration was promised financial assistance. Henceforth, Tirana stressed that the Albanian-Yugoslav border should not be forcibly changed.

In a further attempt to consolidate their self-declared "Kosovo Republic" and to present them to the international community as a coherent and unified mini-state in the making, the Albanian political parties in Kosovo organized parliamentary and presidential elections, which were held on May 24, 1992. The elections themselves, which Serbian authorities declared illegal, were carried out mostly without official interference, although in many places, ballot-papers and other election materials were confiscated and some election officials were arrested. [Ref.62] Thus, the Kosovars'



parallel institutional structure was completed. During the process of their institution building, they had substantially modified their national goal. At first, Albanians fought to preserve their autonomy stipulated by the 1974 constitution, but Serbia's suspension of Kosovo's autonomy created a new aim--an Albanian Republic within Yugoslavia. However the break-up of Yugoslavia caused yet another formulation of the national goal, which eventually emerged as a self-declared "sovereign and independent Kosovo."

Despite such apparently overwhelming support, the newly elected parliament never actually convened--partly because of severe interference by Serbian police. The parliament would have legitimized itself and thus presented the international community with the embarrassing dilemma of not being able to recognize it officially. Instead, Albanian legislators began meeting in small groups to coordinate their policy options. Attention was understandably still focused on relations with the DP in neighboring Albania, which was still reeling with euphoria over its victory. In July 1992, in a move, which suggested that the issue of gradual unification was still very much on the agenda, Albanian government officials and Kosovars leaders met to discuss socio-economic cooperation.

By mid-1992, the Province's 170,000 Serbs and Montenegrins accounted for just 9% of Kosovo's population. [Ref.63] Although Kosovo still remained the most potent symbol of Serbian nationalism, the Slavs had long since lost the demographic war for Kosovo, and biologically the Albanians were well on their way to achieving an "ethnically pure" Kosovo.

By mid-1992, the atmosphere in Kosovo had become extremely tense. There was a pervading sense of insecurity and all its citizens feared an impending conflict. While the war went on in the western republics, Kosovo managed to maintain its relative peace. The leaders of both the Serb and Albanian communities recognized that any outbreak of hostilities between them would surpass even the Bosnian war in violence and consequently be fatal to the interests of both nations. Thus, in spite of their mutual distrust and profoundly disrupted relations, the Serbs and Albanians of Kosovo took care not to go beyond a point where conflict would be inevitable. Thus the gravest ethnic problem in Yugoslavia escaped from being drawn into the Yugoslav civil war, but relations between the two communities remained frozen in a way seen nowhere else. [Ref.64]

The strong gains of the Serbian ultra-nationalist parties in the Yugoslav elections in December 1992 cast a pall of fear over sections of Kosovo's Albanian population. Although Milosevic's Socialist Party won forty-seven seats in the federal Parliament, thirty-three seats went to the Radical Party led by the extreme Serb nationalist leader Vojislav Seselj, who during the electoral campaign had demanded the expulsion of all Albanians from Kosovo, saying that if they did not respect the Serbian administration in Kosovo then they should go and live in their own newly democratic national state next door.

During the first half of 1993, talks on the issue of education in Kosovo were held at intervals in Geneva (attended by both Federal and Serb representatives) but yielded no results. The talks were supposed to concentrate on education policies but moved toward more substantial political issues such as autonomy.

The Albanian boycott of multi-party elections in Serbia in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 strengthened the power of the leading Serbian parties. This persistent refusal by the Kosovars to participate in electoral process caused frustration among international observers, who believed that the Kosovo problem could not be resolved without strengthening democratic institution in Serbia requiring the political participation of the Albanian segment of the population in the political life of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

As the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina dragged on, external powers increasingly favored the idea that the republics were state entities. Therefore, Kosovo was an integral part of Serbia and under its internal jurisdiction. The international community had two reasons for insisting on Bosnia's territorial integrity. One was to safeguard European security and stability by protecting the Helsinki norm on existing borders. The other reason was containment of a spreading conflict. Allowing the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina would have only begun a domino effect and increased the likelihood of war in adjoining areas. [Ref.65]

The Kosovars had persistently tried to internationalize their problem. After the initial international support for the Albanian national movement in Kosovo, however, the international community changed its attitude, taking the standpoint that any attempt at the forced secession of this province from Serbia and Yugoslavia would undoubtedly spread the conflict first to neighboring Macedonia and then to other neighboring countries.

President Milosevic's visit to Kosovo in July 1995 was accompanied by words of reconciliation. He proclaimed his confidence that Kosovo would become "a region of mutual understanding, cooperation and coexistence." [Ref.66]

By October 1995, there was a generally optimistic mood internationally that the war in former Yugoslavia was ending. The Kosovar leadership also hoped that the status of Kosovo would be resolved as part of a comprehensive peace settlement for former Yugoslavia, but they were to be gravely disappointed: any hope of a solution to the Kosovo crisis had to be abandoned by the international community in order to gain support of Belgrade to implement a peace agreement for Bosnia. At Dayton, where the peace settlement for Bosnia was finally hammered out, the Bosnian Serbs were given their own republic within the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the lifting of United Nations' sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro was not made conditional on a solution to the Kosovo problem. This was to be treated as an issue of autonomy and human rights. There was never any mention of Kosovo becoming independent.

In response to the situation after the Dayton Accords, the Kosovars, hurt and humiliated were forced to reevaluate their political stance. Aware that their passive policy throughout the Yugoslav war had denied them an invitation to the peace talks, many Albanians were no longer prepared to abide by an unacceptable solution to the status of Kosovo -- in other words, Kosovo remained as an autonomous province within a new Yugoslavia. This was equally unacceptable for the Kosovo Serbs for whom it represented a return to the despised 1974 Constitution. At Dayton, it was clarified that no change of borders in Yugoslavia should be sanctioned. The Kosovars viewed this stance as hypocritical because the Dayton Peace Accord had allowed the Bosnian Serbs to retain

their separate Republika Srpska, and even offered them the prospects of confederal links with Serbia. So, why then could the Albanians not have their Republika Kosova within the framework of Yugoslavia, under similar conditions? The moral argument used by the Albanians was that the former entity was entirely new and had been established by force, by which it gained international recognition, while the latter had already existed as a territorial entity, albeit not as a republic. The Albanians believed, therefore, that they should not be put at a disadvantage because they had refused so far to back up their demands with violence.

Thus, the single most important message the Kosovars learned from Dayton was that it gave value to the armed struggle of the Bosnian Serbs by recognizing, even if only partly, the Serb Republic of Bosnia. This convinced many Albanians that the international community understood only the language of armed conflict and not that of non-violence.

For the majority of Kosovars the status quo in Kosovo could no longer be preserved. Despite countless statements from the LDK and human rights organizations about human rights abuses, the international community continued to ignore the issue of Kosovo's self-determination, insisting that it remained an internal issue for remaining Yugoslavia. As a result the growing despair and frustration, allowed the passive policies of the Albanian resistance to be replaced by a more offensive strategy, led by guerilla groups like Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

In an interview for the Kosovar magazine Koha, the then British ambassador Ivor Roberts, explained the international community position on Kosovo in the light of the Dayton Accord:

...we have to find a way of finding a middle path between the requirement for self-government of the people of Kosovo and respect for international borders laid down in the Helsinki Convention....An Albanian may say to me 'but we do not accept these borders' and I understand why you say that. Nevertheless, I have to say that this is not a view supported by the international community. That is therefore a reality we have to live with. [Ref.67]

Thus, the international community was trying to ensure territorial integrity for Yugoslavia along with self-determination for the Albanians, by asking both Serbs and Albanians to find a middle way. However, that was difficult because the starting point for this middle way was the datum that Kosovo must be treated as a constituent part of Serbia.

The impression has been allowed to spread that the Helsinki Agreement prohibits changes of frontiers, but this is not so; what Helsinki prohibits is the use of force to change frontiers. Frontier changes by consent are theoretically possible, and many international boundaries in Eastern and Central Europe and the former Yugoslavia have become international frontiers in the 1990s, mostly by consensual processes.

In the absence of any initiative from Belgrade, the situation in Kosovo was becoming increasingly complex and dangerous. Kosovo's Slavs, determined not to suffer the same fate of Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia, were mobilizing themselves in their drive to keep Kosovo within the borders of Yugoslavia, and at the same time, Albanians living in southern Serbian towns were demanding self-determination and unification with Kosovo.

Tensions were further heightened in June 1996 in a speech by the president of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, Alexander Despic, who called the Kosovo issue "the most important strategic problem of the Serbian people's future" shocked his listeners by suggesting that, because of the overwhelming demographic superiority of the Albanians in Kosovo, the time had possibly come for a "peaceful and civilized secession of the region from the federation." [Ref.68]

The Yugoslav war postponed the resolution of the Kosovo problem and unfortunately served to maintain a precarious peace in the Province. Furthermore, it remains indisputable that the maximalist objectives of both Serbs and Albanians were unobtainable without war. The ultimate goal of Albanians is "an independent and sovereign Kosovo," but both United States and the European Community have clearly stated that political autonomy with guaranteed minority rights is the only internationally acceptable status for Kosovo.

When many Kosovars confronted the stark reality of their situation, a small sector of Kosovar society gradually drifted back into the Serb dominated economic and civic life of Kosovo. At the same time, a younger and more militant sector chose to support a more aggressive, violent position.

A certain problem solving for Kosovo legal status came in 1999 in the framework of the Rambouillet Accords [Ref.69] and Security Council Resolution 1244 [Ref.70], which established a mechanism for final a settlement, stated that:

Three years after entry into force of the Accords, an international meeting will be convened to determine a mechanism for a final settlement for Kosovo, on the basis of the will of the people,

opinions of relevant authorities, each party's efforts regarding the implementation of the Accords, and the Helsinki Final Act.

This can be interpreted as encouragement from the international community for larger autonomy or even a certain degree of independence for Kosovo.

**D. THE ISSUE OF ALBANIAN REUNIFICATION; TOWARD A GREATER ALBANIA.**

Although by the end of 1992 Albanians had to put the idea of national unification into a single state "on hold," they were resolute that the incipient process of unification was already under way, and that the Albanian nation had achieved what President Berisha termed a "spiritual unification." Despite his being overwhelmed with intensely serious internal problems, Berisha's outspoken support for the Kosovars had helped keep Kosovo on the international agenda and presented the world with a united Albanian front. However, as the situation in Bosnia became ever more intractable, Western pressure on Tirana to recognize the inviolability of its frontiers with Serbia and Montenegro was increased. The international community urged Berisha to help prevent war spreading through the Balkans through continuing restraint over the increasing maltreatment of Albanians in Kosovo. Berisha was aware that any move toward a forcible change of borders and the creation of a unified Albania would cause a bloodbath and lose Albania all of the foreign economic assistance it so desperately needed.

Yet, Albanian nationalists and academics were still hotly debating the issue of Albanian national unification. In contrast to Rugova's moderate stand, which was



evidently still supported by the overwhelming majority of Kosovars, Kosovo's pre-eminent scholar, Rexhep Qosja, who refused to be associated with any particular political party, had emerged as the mouthpiece of a steadily growing segment of the Kosovar population who had concluded that the Albanians and the Serbs had to part ways. [Ref.71] Qosja had publicly chastised Rugova for supposedly leading the Albanians up a dead-end with his insistence on peaceful resistance. A first indication that Berisha was falling out of favor with the Kosovars came at the beginning of 1993. It was symptomatic of the widely differing views on Albanian-Kosovar dialogue when in February Qosja wrote a rather hysterical open letter to Berisha accusing him of "damaging our [the Kosovars] historical image and rejecting our ideals."

The trouble occurred after Berisha stated in an interview that: "the idea of a Greater Albania is not considered in serious Albanian political circles." Qosja responded by accusing Berisha of:

...confusing the term 'Greater Albania' with 'Original Albania'. Albania and Kosovo cannot be called a Greater Albania. There is, however, Mr. President, an Original Albania...a natural Albania...a true Albania. You have belittled the sacrifices of all those Albanian historians, scientists and writers who have suffered in Serbian prisons for fighting for an Original Albania and the Republic of Kosovo. Albania has never accepted its existing borders and had always tried to remind international circles that these borders are unjust, dividing the Albanian land in two. They are borders that go through the heart of the Albanian people. As President, you should know the history of your own people and of the year 1912. None of us has the moral right to speak in the name of future generations. [Ref.72]

To this Berisha angrily replied accusing Qosja of being a "radical":

The Kosovo issue can never be solved through terrorism. The Albanian movement in Kosovo has been successful particularly because of

its civilized and unterroristic methods. Other ideas that promote violence would legalize violence and aggression in the Balkans and lead to a true Balkan and Albanian tragedy. [Ref.73]

There was disgust at Sali Berisha's recent change of policy. He too under U.S. pressure had accepted the notion of autonomy for Kosovo. Berisha like Ramiz Alia before him repeatedly called for an end to human rights violations against Albanians but stopped short of demanding any change of international borders.

The Kosovars' sense of betrayal reached its height when the Albanian president Sali Berisha aligned himself with Western counterparts in supporting the solution of the Albanian question within Serbia. Berisha, who was much commended at that time by the UN and NATO for his policy of restraint over the Albanian national question, was now calling for talks between the local Kosovar leadership and Belgrade.

In March 1997, the unstable situation in Kosovo was eclipsed by events occurring over the border. Albania exploded into anarchy and chaos due to the failure of high-risk investment schemes in which almost every family lost its savings. As the protests grew into anti-government insurgency, the Kosovars became extremely confused:

The troubles in Albania have psychologically weakened the negotiating position of Kosovo's Albanians. They have shown that Serbia still has better chances for reforms than Albania. What has happened in Albania makes clear that the solution for Kosovo lies in negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo Albanians and not in Albania or somewhere else. [Ref.74]

Thus, the dream of uniting all Albanians had to be put into cold storage.

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## IV. THE FUTURE OF KOSOVO.

### A. KOSOVO: A STARTING POINT FOR A FUTURE BALKAN WAR?

Because half of Europe's Muslim Albanians living outside Albania proper in Slavic and Greek Orthodox countries, the risk of a broader Balkan conflict remains. Nearly eight million Albanians are living outside their homeland in neighboring Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Greece. [Ref.75]

Due to the irredentist nationalism that characterizes both sides (Serbs and Albanians), the possibility of yet another front on a widening Balkan war cannot be ruled out. There are several factors, correlation of forces and NATO actions aside that might persuade Tirana that it could get away with a cross-border intervention. First, Albania is severely impoverished and over-populated. It has little to lose and is certainly not in a position to accept even larger numbers of refugees. Second, with the United States and its European allies becoming more involved in Macedonia and Albania itself, Tirana might conclude that those countries might become *de facto* allies in the event of the Balkan war spilling over into Macedonia. Should there be such a spillover, Albanians might also call on Turkey for tangible support. It should not be forgotten that the two countries, during the June 1992 visit to Tirana of Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation and a month later a defense cooperation agreement. [Ref.76]

More likely is an accidental spillover into Macedonia, especially with the repression of the 600,000 to 800,000 Albanians within Macedonia and above all the

massive influx of refugees since March 1999. Tensions in Macedonia increased in February 1995, when the Skopje government, which seeks to assimilate its Albanians rather than grant them cultural or political autonomy, refused to allow the Albanians a separate university in the northwest city of Tetovo. In the following months street clashes in the capital spread to heavier fighting in the northwestern part of the country, where the majority of Albanians are huddled along the border with Albania proper. [Ref.77]

The situation is complicated by the truly Byzantine manipulation played by Greece and for that matter, Albania vis-à-vis Serbia, which is viewed as a fellow Orthodox Christian country deserving of aid. Greece has ethnic/territorial disputes with both Albania and Macedonia. Both of them have countrymen living in northern Greece and there are upward of 100,000 Greek communists living in the southern Albanian region of Vorio Epirus. Athens, however, evidently focuses much attention on Macedonia, which it fears might act as a magnet for discontent in Greece's province of the same name. Because of this complicated mix of motivations, Greece's relations with Macedonia have been worsening. Again, Albania is in no condition to pick a fight with anyone and the prospect of Albanian intervention in Macedonia is almost nil except for being dragged into fighting occasioned by a secessionist attempt by Macedonia's Muslims. [Ref.78]

The most likely source of a major Balkan-wide escalation of fighting is along the ethnic-confessional fault lines running through Kosovo and Macedonia. Thus, the international community feared that the possibility of a slide into a Balkan war would have begun with:

...the military involvement of Greece, which does not want a divided Macedonia on its border, and Turkey, which has been training Albania's army. Finding themselves on opposing sides of a shooting war would have obviously momentous consequences for Greece and Turkey. The next domino, in this line of thinking, is Cyprus. [Ref.79]

Since most Albanians are Muslims, those hostile or suspicious of them have tended to think of and portray them as Islamic, even though there are Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Albanians, too. At the same time, the largely Orthodox Russians have gravitated toward traditional support for their fellow Orthodox Serbs. On the other side, the growing alliance of Turks and Albanians at some level reflects the coming together of mutual bonding of same religious faiths. [Ref.80]

Russia's support of Serbia is a product of the frustrations and myths that have driven Russia's foreign policy since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Unable to come to terms with its diminished status on the world stage, Russia has resorted to a containment policy that seeks to curtail the West's influence in international affairs by any means available. [Ref.81]

Concerning Albania, the secession of Kosovo would render Serbia a much weaker state and invite endless bloodshed. The Albanian government has often emphasized the unity of all Albanians, implying the absorption of part of Serbia (Kosovo). When the conflict in Kosovo started the international community feared that the Albanians would try to resettle the southern part of Albania, called Northern Epires with Albanians from Kosovo and expel the ethnic Greeks that presently live there. Such a move by Tirana would have compelled intervention from Greece to protect the Greek population in

Northern Epires. In response, the Turks might have rushed to support their fellow Muslims in Albania, leading to a major explosion of conflict in the Balkans. [Ref.82]

In sum, it would appear that the most immediate *casus belli* for a Balkan-wide conflict would be some dissolution or spillover into Macedonia and that the key in the wake of such events would be the reaction of Greece.

Washington feared from 1992 until 1998/1999 that a Serbian assault against the Albanian Kosovars would consume the entire southern Balkan region in a conflagration that would pit one NATO ally against another. Hostilities in Kosovo would probably spill into Albania proper. This in turn could incite the large Albanian minority in Macedonia and lead to Serbian or Greek intervention there. Bulgaria and Turkey would then feel pressure to act in order to prevent Greek control of Macedonia. Whereas the Bosnian war could be contained, a conflict in Kosovo most likely could not.

## **B. OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS.**

A solution to the Kosovo crisis should consider the conflicting views of both Serbs and Albanians. According to a recent poll, (March 2001) in Serbia and Montenegro 42% of the Serbs desired to abolish all autonomy for Kosovo, while 40.7% were prepared to allow for limited autonomy. Furthermore, only 2.2% thought that they have the right to become a republic and 5.9% promoted partition of the region along Serb and Kosovar held areas.

The Kosovars were 88.9% in favor of independence, and 26.9% supported territorial division and population exchanges. It must also be said that over 50% were willing to return to an "autonomous province" status that was guaranteed under the 1974 Constitution. [Ref.83]

The following analysis about the options available in settling Kosovo problem must take into account the fact that the international community has established Kosovo as being part of Yugoslavia. The inability of the international community to establish a final outcome for both ethnicities of Kosovo (Serbs and Albanians) and implement a comprehensive plan for Kosovo, first during the Dayton peace Accords and then at Rambouillet, has legitimized it as an internal matter for the Former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).

Even though it is still possible that Kosovo will be able to escape from the Serb tutelage in the short term, it is uncertain that they will be able to break away from the FRY.

### **C. WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES? (KOSOVO IN SERBIA, KOSOVO IN ALBANIA, KOSOVO AS AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY)**

#### **1. Maintaining the Status Quo.**

The status quo is the best solution for Serbia. The break-up of Yugoslavia was harmful for Serbia in terms of power and economics, but losing Kosovo will be worse. By contrast, a continuation of the crisis can only divert the public's attention from the economic problems of the country.



To both LDK and KLA and the international community, the status quo is an unacceptable solution. Both LDK and KLA will continue to fight and demand for a change in the province's status as long as there is enough moral support and financial aid for their cause from diaspora and even international actors. For the international community, the large amounts of refugees, human rights violations and daily killings in the Kosovo area combined with the possibility of the conflict spilling over into other ethnic Albanian areas (since March 2001 in Macedonia) is a situation that can no longer be tolerated by international community.

Thus, the status quo option is untenable for both parties. Such an option is a "lose-lose" solution. Furthermore, in the long-term such an approach will drain the Serb economy and will make the Kosovars more alienated and radicalized as they pursue a new status, leading to large flows of refugee from the area and even a resuming of guerilla warfare. [Ref.84]

## **2. Return to an Autonomous Status.**

The current situation in Kosovo with its rise in ethnic tensions is in part the outcome of the profound change in its status with the revocation in 1989 of Kosovo autonomy as guaranteed by the 1974 Constitution. Until 1989, Kosovo enjoyed the same characteristics as other republics, having its own Constitution, legislative body, financial autonomy and representation in the federal parliament, constitutional court and presidency. Nevertheless, the Serbs considered this Constitution as unacceptable because they believed that the Kosovars supported by them financially had too much power in the federal government and did not offer much to the other republics.

For the Kosovars, a return to the autonomous status before 1989 would be a starting point for further demands and long-term negotiations.

This solution can be a long-term convenience for Serbs who can thus preserve the territorial integrity of the FRY and avoid any other international implication, which can compel them to concede more than they would like to (for example establishing an international protected area or even a republic status).

This option is a "win-win" solution acceptable for both parties.

### **3. Republic Status.**

Giving Kosovo a republic status, thus an equal status with the other two republics that are part of the FRY, is a difficult solution to implement due to its consequences.

The Serbs will be compelled to give up some of their federal superiority to another republic, in other words they will lose power. Furthermore, they will have to deal with other nationalistic movements in Vojvodina and Sandzak, which in turn may ask for the same treatment and privileges. Under this arrangement, Kosovo would have its own Constitution, legislature and even the power to veto the federal government. Constitutionally, the Kosovars would have the right to secede, leading to further demands from Albanians who live in Macedonia. In the long-term, they could raise the question of "Greater Albania" which could complicate the unstable situation in the Balkans even more.

While the republic status would be ideal for the Kosovars the international community should avoid this option because it can empower the other minorities who live in Serbia and Macedonia to request the same treatment.

For the Serbs this solution is unacceptable because in the long-term losing Kosovo means losing the soul of Serbia. This option is a "win-lose" solution for Kosovars and Serbs.

#### **4. Independence or Partition.**

Independence is the most desirable solution for Kosovars, but would be disastrous for the Serbs. Even though the LDK's position evolved from the restoration of autonomy granted under the 1974 Constitution to republic status and then to full independence (in February 1998), it seems that now settling the conflict is more open to international involvement. This is a consequence of LDK's "passive resistance". On the other hand, the KLA is committed to achieving independence and even to paving the way for a further unification with Albania. [Ref.85] The Serbs dismissed this solution and they declared that military force would be used to protect their land, religious landmarks (the Kosovo area has many Orthodox churches) and Serbian people.

The international community denounced this option fearing that independence would only set the conditions for a possible creation of the Greater Albania. On the other hand, this would create more waves of Serbs migrating from the area. Furthermore, the other independence movements of minorities in the area (Hungarians in Vojvodina and Muslims in Sandzak) would interpret this as a starting point for their requests to also be fulfilled.

Some Western voices said that Kosovo should be partitioned, giving the Serbs the north part of the province and the Albanians the rest. However, standing back and letting the Serbs and Albanians carve up Kosovo into two ethnically pure sectors would create more problems than it would solve.

Serbs in northern Mitrovica are far from reconciled to losing the whole of Kosovo to the Albanians. The first obstacle to any easy partition plan is that the area around Mitrovica is ringed with mines producing gold, zinc and other precious minerals. These mines, coveted by Hitler in World War II and vital to Yugoslavia's economy during the Cold War, have taken on an unjustified mythical importance to the locals. Western experts may pronounce the mines uncompetitive in today's economy, but Serbian and Albanian leaders would more likely return to war than admit such a reality. [Ref.86]

The larger problem is that even if a deal over the mines could be negotiated, partitioning the north of Kosovo would set an alarming precedent. In Montenegro, which is edging toward a secession between those who would remain Serbia's partner in the Yugoslav federation and those who would break with Belgrade, there is already talk of pro-Serb regions seceding and joining Serbia.

Dividing Kosovo might also spur Albanians who live in western Macedonia to act on their threats to secede from the republic. Likewise, the Serbs and Croats in Bosnia might react similarly. In addition, these secessions would likely come at the price of new wars.

The international community would not approve of such a scenario not only because demands for a "Greater Albania" can be raised but also because they are reluctant to define borders according to ethnicity or religion as was done in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Furthermore, this can lead to a domino effect in most of the Eastern European countries, which have more than one minority within their borders. Thus, this option over the long-term is a "lose-lose" solution.

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## V. CONCLUSION.

The situation in Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe is the product of forces and events of recent times: 19<sup>th</sup> century romanticism, the emergence of the modern nation state after the French Revolution and the collapse of the Hapsburg and the Ottoman empires. The supposedly “ancient ethnic hatreds” in Yugoslavia are more a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon of crossed purposes and failed policies.

The forces at work in contemporary ethnic wars are neither ancient for the most part nor incomprehensible. They are a modern phenomenon, and a great deal could be done by the powers to have contained their atrocious consequences.

Ethnic conflicts will likely dominate the course of events in the Eastern half of Europe and the former Soviet Union for years to come, with serious jeopardy to the narrow but crucial gains that European political civilization has made since 1945.

The nationalist ethnic state is a product of the political imagination; it does not exist in reality. Ethnic nationalism is the product of a certain idea of the nation, which originated in German romanticism (circa 1800-1890) and the German cultural and intellectual reaction to the universalizing ideas of the French Enlightenment and revolution and other revolutionary wars. Romanticism glorified ones roots to ones native land, instincts, the priority of emotions over abstractions and thought and hence the unity of “race” and state. [Ref.87]

The ethnic definition of citizenship makes it a matter of nature itself, of “race”. Serbia’s war to create a “Greater Serbia” is a logical application of the ethnic principle.

Thus, all Serbs outside Serbia's borders have to be brought into a single state. Until then, the Serbian nation is persecuted and oppressed, threatened with "extermination." [Ref.88] Serbs' identity has been shaped by victimization, military defeat and humiliation.

The idea of an ethnic nation obviously is a permanent provocation to war. The ethnic state's contradictory and potentially catastrophic consequences manifested themselves in the 1930s, were suppressed by Stalin and by the Cold War and now are liberated by the end of the Cold War. Ethnic states are the reality of contemporary Southeastern Europe and the Soviet successor states. Keeping ethnic tensions from turning violent is highly difficult. It is not only the heavy hand of imperial rule that can impose ethnic cooperation. In most circumstances, the desire for democracy and economic growth can do the same.

A key objective of the international community is to halt violence in Kosovo and prevent it from spreading into Macedonia and elsewhere beyond Kosovo. If Kosovo again dissolves into war, Macedonia and Albania will be drawn inexorably into the conflict. Then, Greece and Turkey, two U.S. allies and NATO members will be pulled into a full-blown Balkan war that, in turn could spread still further or tear the Atlantic Alliance apart.

A multiethnic society cannot be built in Kosovo. The reason is simple: it is not possible to rebuild something that never really existed in the first place. Because Kosovo, unlike Bosnia, has no tradition of interethnic harmony, its Serbs will continue to flee. Furthermore, a policy that focuses merely on building a multiethnic society in Kosovo actually makes a new crisis more, rather than less, likely. For such a policy completely

overlooks the extent to which nationalistic sentiment guides the ambitions of ethnic Albanians not only in Kosovo, but also in neighboring Macedonia and Albania.

The answers to Kosovo are not obvious. Eventual reunification with Yugoslavia is almost out of the question, even on extremely generous terms. If Kosovo eventually gains independence, it will still be an economic disaster. The result would be two Albanian states in Southeastern Europe, bordering a restive Albanian population in Macedonia. This would not only threaten the stability and integrity of Macedonia but would also have a spillover effect on Greece, which is home to an estimated 800,000 Albanian emigrants. Moreover, an independent Kosovo would be perpetually subject to attacks from Serbia. Alone, neither Kosovo nor Albania is viable; at least together, with suitable safeguards and a commitment from the West to ensure their economic viability, they stand some chance.

In the short-term, no decision should be taken in Kosovo that does not take into account the spillover effect on Albania and Macedonia. On the economic front, the international effort to rebuild Kosovo must proceed in tandem with an effort to develop the other ethnic Albanian populations in the region. On the political front, a failure to address ethnic Albanians' national ambitions will increase the likelihood that the region will become more dangerous and perhaps bloodier.



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